

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 5 September 1978 CG NIDC 78/207



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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 5 September 1978

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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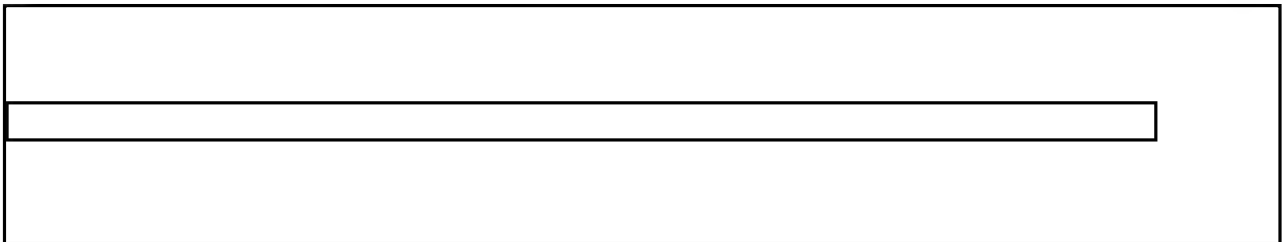
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LEBANON: Situation Report

Fighting broke out again in Beirut over the weekend as Syrian troops responded to sniper and small arms fire from Lebanese Christians with tank and artillery barrages. Christian extremists may try to heat up the situation in Lebanon during the Camp David talks.

Syrian troops and Christian militiamen clashed in the southern suburbs of Beirut on Sunday and Monday. The fighting, the most serious in several weeks, apparently began when militiamen tried to improve their tactical positions. The fighting subsided late yesterday.

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The Syrians probably also want to avoid a major crisis during the talks, although they are likely to continue to improve their position on the ground.

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VIETNAM: Phom Van Dong's Trip

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[REDACTED] Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong is scheduled to arrive in Thailand tomorrow on the first leg of a trip designed to improve Hanoi's relations with its Southeast Asian neighbors. Vietnam's new enthusiasm for a zone of peace and neutrality and for stronger bilateral ties has prompted reserve and caution in Southeast Asian capitals, but the Vietnamese are determinedly courting the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

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[redacted] Vietnam has responded to the deterioration in Sino-Vietnamese relations by moving closer to the USSR and by seeking to improve relations with both Asian and Western states. Vietnam's hostility toward ASEAN was abruptly reversed in June, when the Vietnamese proposed a "zone of independence, peace, and neutrality" in Southeast Asia similar to the zone of peace proposed earlier by Malaysia.

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[redacted] Pham Van Dong will apparently visit Indonesia and the Philippines later this month and travel to Malaysia in early October. Singapore, which is the least receptive of all the ASEAN members to political rapprochement with Vietnam, is not on Pham Van Dong's itinerary.

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Vietnam-China

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[redacted] China's chief delegate to the talks with Vietnam has returned to Hanoi for another session of negotiations. He stayed a week in Peking for consultations. The Chinese and Vietnamese have held four sessions of talks but have not made discernible progress toward a settlement. Both countries continue to exchange acrimonious charges--Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong's National Day speech on Saturday included a heated attack on the Chinese leadership--but their apparent interest in maintaining a diplomatic dialogue suggests that neither side wants to appear intransigent nor do they want the situation to deteriorate further. [redacted]

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Angola - South Africa

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[redacted] Angola released eight South African prisoners of war on Saturday in exchange for three Cuban soldiers captured during fighting in Angola three years ago. All the prisoners received good treatment while in captivity and were in good health. One other South African soldier, captured by guerrillas of the South-West Africa People's Organization earlier this year, is still being held in Angola.

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